

1-1-1976

# The Effect Of College Instruction In Family Relations On Marital Satisfaction And Marital Stability

Kathryn L. Lister

*Eastern Illinois University*

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LISTER, KATHRYN L

THE EFFECT OF COLLEGE INSTRUCTION IN FAMILY RELATIONS ON

MARITAL SATISFACTION AND MARITAL STABILITY

(TITLE)

BY

Kathryn L. Lister

THESIS

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF SCIENCE IN HOME ECONOMICS EDUCATION

IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL, EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS

1976

YEAR

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THIS THESIS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING  
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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The writer is indebted to many people for assistance in the completion of this research: Mr. Robert Butts and Mrs. Carol Nolan, School of Home Economics, E.I.U., and Dr. Carl Sexton, Health Education Department, E.I.U., and the Eastern Illinois University Alumni Services Office for assistance in defining and obtaining the sample and control groups; E.I.U. Computer Services and Mr. Russell Engelmann for assistance in tabulating and interpreting data; and Miss Connie Jackson for clerical help.

Special thanks is owed Dr. Mary Ruth Swope, Dr. Joyce Crouse and Mrs. Barbara Owens, E.I.U. School of Home Economics, for their professional assistance and example throughout this graduate study. Their unselfish gift of their time and careful analysis of all parts of the study made the research progress smoothly and enjoyably.

The writer is particularly indebted to Dr. Evelyn Melloh, E.I.U. School of Home Economics, as the primary advisory for all graduate study. As a teacher, her humanism and high standards of professionalism have combined to constantly require and achieve the best in all her students. As a friend, her love and confidence in my abilities have provided encouragement so often needed to continue with work that seemed too difficult at first glance. Her influence on my life, both professionally and personally, will always be warmly remembered.

Final thanks goes to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Stanley Lusader, and my sister, Mrs. Susan Odle, for their years of loving encouragement and enthusiastic interest in all academic exploration; and to my husband,

Charles, for his neverfailing encouragement, constant love and uncomplaining personal sacrifice. Without these people, this work would never have been completed.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM

#### STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Authorities in the area of marriage and family relations and many segments of the general public are becoming increasingly concerned about changes in the American family life. Often quoted statistics indicate a rising divorce rate and new increases in the number of single parent homes. Current popular publications examine alternatives to traditional monogamous marriage such as serial monogamy, group marriage, homosexual marriage, polygamy and others.

(Instruction in relationships in marriage and sociology of the family has a well-established place in the college curriculum. New concerns and questions about the future of the family have placed a new responsibility on marriage and family relations courses: to encourage students in application of current research, socially accepted values and concepts which they have studied in these courses to maintenance or improvement of their personal family relationships. This is the goal.

Accountability demands that instructors and advocates of marriage and family relationships classes analyze the direction and relevance of their efforts. Is the college student instructed in marriage and family living classes a more satisfied or stable family member or spouse than his peer who had no formal preparation in this area? Is the material discussed and read in these courses the type that students later find usable in real-life situations? What areas should be em-



phasized or which can be deleted?

Does college instruction in marriage and family relations help students to establish more satisfying and stable marriages and families? This is the foremost question for consideration in this study.

#### PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Course evaluations of content and instruction in college courses are commonly used and are often helpful to the instructor who is interested in student opinion. Re-evaluation of course topics by former students who have had the opportunity to use these concepts is rare and difficult to obtain. Former students too seldom are given an opportunity to re-evaluate and share with college instructors their analyses of course content and emphasis in the light of later realistic experience. The area of marriage and family relations is a unique study in so far as it has direct application to 93% of the population, the marrying group in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Ninety-three percent of the students might, theoretically, use concepts learned while enrolled in a family relations course every day of their married life.

There are many studies available in which researchers site statistics analyzing divorce rate for a group according to educational level, (Glick 1957; Census 1953; HEW 1957; Glick and Carpenter 1958; Locke 1951; Monahan 1952, 1953, 1958; Burgess and Cottrell 1939; Landis

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<sup>1</sup>U.S. Bureau of Census, Population Estimates and Projections, Series P-25, 1970 Census.

1946; Terman 1938; Hamilton 1929; Bernard 1934; Kirkpatrick 1937; Geismar and LaSorte 1963).<sup>2</sup> Other studies rate marital satisfaction for a given population, (Burgess 1963, Blood and Wolfe 1955). However, the writer has found no research based on marital satisfactions or a statistical analysis of divorce rate in which the sampling consisted of only those who have completed a course in marriage and family relations. If one of the goals of marriage and family living courses is to "prepare students for satisfying relationships in a future family,"<sup>3</sup> such statistics could verify or deny achievement of that goal.

#### HYPOTHESIS

The writer proposes the following hypothesis for this study:  
College instruction in marriage and family relations has no effect on marital satisfaction and marital stability.

#### DEFINITIONS

During the course of this research, two terms will recur numerous times. These terms are "marital satisfaction" and "marital

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<sup>2</sup>William N. Stephens, "Predictors of Marital Adjustment," in The Individual, Marriage and the Family, Lloyd Saxton, gen.ed. (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Co., Inc., 1970), pp. 193.

<sup>3</sup>Hazel Taylor Spitze, "The Teaching of Family Relationships and the Quality of Life," Illinois Teacher of Home Economics, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (Jan./Feb. 1976): pp. 117.

stability." The difficulty in interpreting these terms concisely is analyzed by Hicks and Platt:

In our society, marriages are assessed by two norms: happiness and stability. Happiness is an extremely personal and subjective phenomenon and difficult to measure with the tools which are currently available to social scientists. Stability, too, is a phenomenon difficult to measure. However, the extreme of low-stability eventuates in the dissolution of the marriage and becomes a public index which can be studied."<sup>4</sup>

In the same text, Burgess, in a 1963 study, objects

. . . to the use of happiness as a criterion of marital success: the evaluation is subjective, a marriage may be happy for the husband but not for the wife, there is no guaranty of honesty, and there is a known tendency for subjects to give socially desirable responses.<sup>5</sup>

Other social researchers have noted that it is difficult to pinpoint the source of one's happiness. Happiness may be the result of marriage or other events in life. Spouses may disagree about the level of happiness or factors which make one person happy do not necessarily serve the same function for another.<sup>6</sup>

Satisfaction, as a long-term and more moderated analysis of status will, therefore, be the term primarily used in this study. Marital satisfaction will be interpreted by respondents according to their own particular responses to various statements. Acknowledgment is made of

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<sup>4</sup>Mary W. Hicks and Marilyn Platt, "Marital Happiness and Stability: A Review of the Research in the Sixties," in A Decade of Family Research and Action, 1960-69, Carlfred B. Broderick, ed. (Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations, 1970), pp. 59.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

the weaknesses of respondent self-analysis of marital happiness as a quantitative or qualitative measure.

Marital stability is defined, for purpose of this study, as a function of number of years married to one spouse. Divorce and separation will be the determinants of marital instability.

Family relations, family living, and marriage and family relations will be interchangeable terms used in this study to denote a college course which deals with interpersonal relations in marriage and in the family unit. Although other related areas of study may be included in these courses, maintaining and improving relationships is one of the major foci.

It is, therefore, with these ideas in mind that this present investigation was begun.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Marriage and family life education is a course area which appears in the curriculum of many high schools, junior colleges and universities. The concept and scope of the course may be similar in different institutions, but confusion often arises because the chosen course titles are so varied. Gambill found the following titles among twenty-eight colleges responding to a 1960 study:<sup>7</sup>

Marriage and the Family	15
Preparation for Marriage	3
Family Living	1
Life Problems	1
Family Relations	1
Home and Family	1
Personality and Family	1
Family	1
Family Community Living	1
Building a Successful Marriage	1
Home and Society	1

The range of titles suggests the direction of the study. Some are internally directed, centering on relationships within the major nuclear family unit. These courses place their major emphasis on role functions and communication techniques. The focus of other courses is on the functional aspects of family living, including budgeting, consumerism and management skills. Some schools plan the curriculum of the family life education course from the viewpoint of the sociologist, the

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<sup>7</sup>G. W. Gambill, "A Survey of Marriage Education in Twenty-nine Junior Colleges," Junior College Journal, 32, (October 1961), p. 97.

anthropologist or the home economist, while others combine these viewpoints. The attitudes promoted, the method and approach of the instruction selected, will often be influenced by the experience and philosophy of the instructor. Some prefer a "problem-solution" format, while the philosophy of another suggests an attitude re-direction and analysis format.

Family life education was once solely the province of higher education. Formal marriage education was introduced on the college level in 1927.<sup>8</sup> Landis, in a 1955-56 study, found 1,027 different courses in marriage and family living taught in 630 different reporting colleges. The content of these courses was generally described as functional, relating study and discussion to topics of practical interest for students.<sup>9</sup> Growth of these courses on the college level has been rapid. Extrapolated by Scoresby, Apolonio and Hatch from a 1955-56 enrollment of more than 100,000 students, 1974 estimates placed 300,000 students in college-level marriage and family living classes.<sup>10</sup>

However, recent curriculum expansion in the modern high school has included marriage and family studies on the secondary level. Forty percent of the responding high schools outside Chicago reported offering

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<sup>8</sup> A. Lynn Scoresby, Franklin J. Apolonio and Gary Hatch, "Action Plans: An Approach to Behavior Change in Marriage Education," Family Coordinator 23, (October 1974), p. 343.

<sup>9</sup> Judson T. Landis, "The Teaching of Marriage and Family Courses in College," Journal of Marriage and the Family 21, (February 1959), p. 37.

<sup>10</sup> Scoresby, Apolonio and Hatch, p. 343.

at least one family living course in 1963.<sup>11</sup> Expansion on the high school level offers opportunities for reaching teenage marriages and other students who do not plan post-high school study with training in family life education.

The range of titles, educational levels, and emphases given in this area can lead to much confusion about the coverage of such training. However, generally accepted objectives are available for referral. Hazel Taylor Spitze outlines the objectives of teaching family relations as helping students to:

1. understand themselves
2. develop a positive self-concept
3. maintain satisfying interpersonal relationships with their present family
4. prepare for satisfying relationships in a future family
5. become self-actualized
6. understand how they can help others to become self-actualized.<sup>12</sup>

More generally, Avery and Lee define family life education as involving:

. . . any and all school experiences deliberately and consciously used by teachers in helping to develop personalities of students to their fullest capacities which equip the individual to solve most constructively the problems unique to the family role.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>E. E. Rosenstiel and H. E. Smith, "Growth of Family Life Education in Illinois," Marriage and Family Living 25, (February 1963), p. 110.

<sup>12</sup>Hazel Taylor Spitze, "The Teaching of Family Relationships and the Quality of Life," Illinois Teacher of Home Economics XIX, (January/February 1976), p. 117.

<sup>13</sup>James Walters and Nick Stinnett, "Should Family Life Education Be Required?," Journal of Home Economics 60, (October 1968), p. 641.

Definitions and objectives such as these can be effectively used to plan and evaluate the scope and direction of family living courses on every level.

Family life education has a definite advantage in elective curriculums because students readily recognize its function in their lives. An extensive study by a committee of the American Medical Association reported that over 70% of the high school and college students questioned expressed a need for more information (on marriage, sex and family relations) than they had obtained from their homes.<sup>14</sup> Students sense a need which they feel family life education can fill.

Society also recognizes the needs of young people in the area of family life education. Evidence indicates that divorce usually takes place at an early age. In 1959, the median age at divorce following a first marriage, in ten states, was about 31 years for men and 28 years for women.<sup>15</sup> The Report of the 1970 Census places median age at marriage at 21 for women and 23 for men. Sixty-six women divorced for every 1000 women married living with their husbands were counted in 1970. This is a radical increase from the 1960 Census when 42 women were divorced for every 1000 women still married living with their husbands. The figures for men during this period also showed a significant increase. In 1960, 28 men were divorced for every 1000 men married living with their spouse.

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<sup>14</sup>Ibid., p. 643.

<sup>15</sup>Hugh Carter and Alexander Plateris, "Trends in Divorce and Family Disruption," in Selected Studies in Marriage and the Family, ed. Robert F. Winch and Louis Wolf Goodman (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, Inc., 1968), p. 567.



By 1970, this number had increased to 42 divorced for 1000 married.<sup>16</sup> The 1970 Census data supported other research in reporting an inverse relationship between divorce rate increase and a couple's income and educational attainment.<sup>17</sup>

Mid-1970's Census tabulations indicate the median age for marriage is rising: 23.5 years for men and 21.2 years for women. The marriage rate dropped in 1975 while the divorce rate continued its rise. Ten percent of all persons age 25 to 54 who had been married reported themselves either separated or divorced and not re-married in 1975. The 1970 figure was 6.9%, a dramatic increase.<sup>18</sup>

Schoen cites in his California research of 1975 the danger of increased divorce among young marriages:

Age at marriage was associated with substantial differences in the risk of divorce. The effect was most pronounced for males at central ages at first marriage 18-25 and for females at central ages at first marriages 16-24. Risk of divorce within 35 years of marriage were roughly twice as great for the low ages at marriage as for the high.<sup>19</sup>

Early education becomes more critical in the light of such statistics. Young marriages, a special risk group, have pressing needs in the sub-

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<sup>16</sup>U.S. Census, 1970.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid.

<sup>18</sup>Austin Scott, "The Census Is On, and Marriage Is Out," Washington Post, 8 January, 1976, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup>Robert Schoen, "California Divorce Rates by Age at First Marriage and Duration of First Marriage," Journal of Marriage and the Family 37 (August 1975), p. 555.

ject areas which should be the special emphasis of family life education.

Researchers have spent many years identifying concepts and challenging misconceptions about the components of marital success, effective preparation for the husband/wife role and the identification of characteristics which are precursors of probable marriage failure. An analysis of some of this research lends perspective to a study of this area.

In an early study (1938) Lewis M. Terman examined the psychological factors which led to a spouse's report of marital happiness. He studied 2484 subjects, both married and divorced persons. A comparison was made between the relationship of 400 variables in three main groups: personality factors, background factors and specific sexual adjustment as they related to the marital happiness scores of 791 married couples in the study.<sup>20</sup>

Terman's study was significant because it attempted to apply quantitative expression to the qualitative idea of happiness. Respondents were asked to subjectively rate the happiness of their marriage. Factual information was gathered on husband-wife agreement or disagreements about various matters, on method used in resolving disagreements, on specific things in the marriage that were unsatisfactory, possible regret over the choice of mate, and on consideration having been given

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<sup>20</sup> Lewis M. Terman, Psychological Factors in Marital Happiness (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., Inc., 1938), p. 2.

to separation or divorce.<sup>21</sup> The study attempted to provide statistical fact instead of opinion to support or reject accepted theories. An example is Terman's finding of no correlation between marital happiness and either the presence or absence of children, disputing the widely-held idea that children made a marriage happier.<sup>22</sup> Terman found slightly greater happiness reported by wives whose husbands were most highly educated. The research also disapproved the concept that high education makes a woman "unfit" for marriage.<sup>23</sup>

W. A. Anderson, in 1950, completed a study of the marital statistics of the Cornell University classes of 1919, 1920, and 1921. Eighty percent of the graduates had married and were still living with their first spouse. Nine percent had been married but were not living with their first spouse. Anderson studied this group to find the history of marital status for the nine percent not living with their first spouse. He found:

4% divorced and remarried  
 1% divorced and not remarried  
 0.2% divorced, remarried, divorced  
 0.1% separated from 1st spouse  
 2% remarried after first spouse died  
 2% not remarried after first spouse died<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 3.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 172.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 188.

<sup>24</sup>W. A. Anderson, Marriages and Families of University Graduates (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1950), p. 13.

Other statistical findings, including those of the U.S. Census, are often criticized for disregarding the example of Anderson and his followers who analyze groups for marital history data plus their current marital status.

Harvey J. Locke chose to compare divorced couples with those judged most happily married by relatives, friends and acquaintances.<sup>25</sup> The subjects for this study were representative of the general population of a county in Indiana. Locke's sample was unique in its representation in a time when most samples were chosen from college populations or on a volunteer basis.

In predicting marriage adjustment, Locke used divorce occurrence as the lower end of the continuum of happiness and adjustment in marriage. Happiness of the marriage as rated by a well-acquainted outsider gave a score for the opposite end of the continuum. (Burgess and Cottrell found this rating to be fairly reliable in their 1939 study.<sup>26</sup>) Locke used these scores to analyze what factors separate those who are succeeding in marriage from those who are failing. Marital adjustment was found to be associated with directorial ability, general personality pattern of adaptability, the capacity to give and receive affection.

In a study of 300 women who graduated from South Dakota State

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<sup>25</sup>Harvey J. Locke, Predicting Adjustment in Marriage: A Comparison of a Divorced and a Happily Married Group (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1951), p. 1.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 359.

University from 1955-1960, Janice Hofer Grimm compared graduates of home economics with graduates of other curricula with respect to family living variables. Most of the participants felt their college education in general was somewhat helpful in preparing them for marriage and family living.<sup>28</sup> In general, those who are college-educated have more stable marriages than those with less education. Researchers have attributed this to later age at marriage, higher income and fewer money problems, or social constraints.

Thomas P. Monahan studied educational achievement and family stability in 1962. His data support earlier research in that duration of marriage to divorce varies over time, with age at marriage, type of wedding ceremony, prior marital condition, premarital pregnancy, race or ethnic background, religion, and to some extent with education, occupation, mobility and other characteristics.<sup>29</sup>

Where do humans gain the competencies needed for success in marriage in our society? "Emotional climate of the parent-child relationship"<sup>30</sup> is the critical background for development of a personality which is emotionally mature, capable of loving and high in self-esteem.

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<sup>28</sup> Janice Hofer Grimm, "Comparison of South Dakota State University Graduates of the Home Economics and of Other Curricula With Respect to Family Living Variable" (Master's Thesis, South Dakota State University, 1972), p. 29.

<sup>29</sup> Mary W. Hicks and Marilyn Platt, "Marital Happiness and Stability: A Review of the Research of the Sixties," in A Decade of Family Research and Action 1960-69, ed. Carlfred B. Broderick (Minneapolis: National Council on Family Relations, 1970), p. 74.

<sup>30</sup> Nick Stinnett, "Readiness for Marital Competence and Family, Dating and Personality Factors," Journal of Home Economics 61, (November 1969), p. 685.

The experience of living in a family and observing the mother and father provides the role concepts and expectations children will relate to for their entire lives. Self-concept and communication skills developed in the family unit shape the personality of each child and form his marriage competencies, for better or worse.

In an investigation of middle-class wives throughout the state of Florida, reacting to the forty-six item Marital Competence Scale, four basic needs were identified:

1. love - providing such qualities as affection, admiration, optimism, security and emotional closeness
2. personality fulfillment - helping mate to achieve potential and autonomy, and assisting in the mate's personality, social and intellectual development
3. respect - treating mate as an individual, avoiding habits which annoy mate, being a good listener, and providing encouragement and understanding
4. communication - expressing true feelings to mate and finding satisfactory solutions to disagreement.<sup>31</sup>

Stinnett's analysis of these findings is that success in marriage is largely a matter of readiness to perform these functions. Those who have prepared have already established a strong foundation for later marital success.<sup>32</sup>

The family is the first training ground for the child in these competencies. Some families, by instruction and example, will be more successful than others in training the child for later marital compe-

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 683.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

tence. Other families will have varying degrees of failure. The question of possible remediation for persons who have not gained these competencies is critical. Can newly acquired knowledge resulting from formal education replace or expand the competencies a marriage candidate possesses?

Some research indicates that a family living class can produce a change in individuals. Florida State was the site of a study to discover how much modification of personality traits occurred after a functional marriage course. Fifty-four students were individually matched according to sex, college classification, ACE exam rank and marital status with fifty-four students in the School of Business and Education. Before and after the sample completed the marriage course, each group was given the Group Rorschach test and the Personality Section of the Burgess-Wallin Marriage Prediction Schedule. Significant differences beyond .05 level were found on the Rorschach test which predominately tests preconscious material. No significant differences were found on the Personality section of the Burgess-Wallin Marriage Prediction Schedule which dealt with neurotic trends.<sup>33</sup> Wetzell felt these findings tend to support the theory that areas of personality are alterable in a relatively short period of time by educational experiences. Participation in a marriage course aids in the modification

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<sup>33</sup>Rita J. Wetzell, "The Effect of a Marriage Course on the Personality Characteristics of Students," Journal of Marriage and the Family XXVII, (August 1965), p. 420.

of personality traits in a significantly positive direction, but has no effect on neurotic trends.<sup>34</sup>

Abramson and Martin studied married graduates of Hamline University in 1960. Those who had completed a marriage education class felt the course gave them a more realistic approach to love, marriage and the roles of men and women.<sup>35</sup>

In studying university courses which were helpful in marital adjustment, Dorothy Dyer found a significant number who had no course of this type rated themselves as less-than-happy.<sup>36</sup> However, slightly more of this group rated their marriage as happy when compared with those who had completed marriage courses. (See Table)

George H. Fink compared those who had completed a marriage education course with those who had not. In 1956, Florida State University alumni who had completed the course reported the following data about the impact on their marriage of this instruction:

34.8% helped a great deal  
52.8% helped somewhat  
12.4% made no difference<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Milton Abramson and Robert R. Martin, "After Office Hours: Education for Marriage and Parenthood," *Obstetrics and Gynecology* 15, (April 1960), p. 538.

<sup>36</sup>Dorothy T. Dyer, "A Comparative Study Relating Marital Happiness to University Courses Helpful in Marital Adjustment," *Marriage and Family Living* 21 (August 1959), p. 233.

<sup>37</sup>George H. Fink, "A Comparative Analysis of the Marriages and Families of Participants in Marriage Education," *Marriage and Family Living* 18 (February 1956), p. 61.



The control group of this study, those who had completed no marriage courses, married at an older average age than those with marriage education background. They remained married longer, married older husbands, married at a greater interval after graduation and waited longer after marriage before having their first children.<sup>38</sup> Fink's conclusion was completion of a family relations course:

. . . does not demonstrably modify the subsequent behavior of the participants in the direction of getting married, staying married and having children.<sup>39</sup>

Many authorities are critical of the expectations for marriage improvement heaped on such courses. Duvall reports Cuber and Kerchoff's opinion that "marriage education tends to be moralistic, class bound, ethnocentric and a fortress of the status quo."<sup>40</sup> Philosophy and impact of the instruction may have an effect on the uneven statistical support of such courses. Pano D. Bardis found marriage educators were not supporting familism in their classes at Albion College. Familism scores, amount of education and completion of a fairly typical college marriage course were found to be unrelated.<sup>41</sup> No data were reported for the reasons for this lack of emphasis and impact. Was this topic unimportant

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<sup>38</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid.

<sup>40</sup>Evelyn M. Duvall, "How Effective Are Marriage Courses?" Journal of Marriage and the Family 27 (February 1965), p. 177.

<sup>41</sup>Panos D. Bardis, "Influence of a Functional Marriage Course on Attitudes toward Familism," The Journal of Educational Sociology 32 (January 1959), p. 233.

to the instruction of these educators in marriage and family studies or was the topic's importance misunderstood by students?

Eleanore Braun Luckey cites other drawbacks of family life education such as impersonalities of the classroom, mutual lack of trust between teacher student, and classroom situations which make the demonstration of good human relationships difficult.<sup>42</sup> An outstanding teacher can overcome these problems but university faculties are reluctant to develop solid curricula that will lead to teacher proficiency in family life education.<sup>43</sup> Duvall adds these variables which can effect the impact of a marriage course:

- a. student readiness
- b. gearing course to student need, interest and involvement
- c. suitability of text, materials and methods to course objective and student orientation
- d. official support and provision for the marriage course
- e. concomitant and concurrent programs in parent and adult education<sup>44</sup>

Paul Glick, a statistician vitally interested in marriage and family life adds suggestions for continuing marriage education throughout married life to improve its impact. This plan would include regular marriage checkups though periodic visits to highly expert marriage counselors and programs: "to increase the appeal of experiencing a good marriage, including the continued collection and dissemination of know-

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<sup>42</sup>Eleanore Braun Luckey, "What I Have Learned About Family Life," The Family Coordinator 23 (July 1974), p. 309.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>Duvall, p. 183.

ledge about how to cultivate such a marriage - so that more emphasis can be placed on building up the positive side of married life."<sup>45</sup>

Glick's plan might be effective because it extends the length of time a person is involved in marriage education (one semester courses may be too brief to bring significant steady changes) and it brings marriage education to the person at a time when its need and purpose are sought and appreciated and motivation to learn is high. This is the period of real marriage experience, with emphasis on times of marital crisis.

The person who is well-prepared for marriage may have developed his competencies in childhood, growing up in a family where he developed a personality strong in marital competencies. Or he may have been educated in marital competencies through a particularly vital and comprehensive family living course in later life where such competencies are recognized as valuable and are nurtured in his further personality development.<sup>46</sup>

This study focuses on marriages of those who are college-educated, a specific portion of the population with unique characteristics. Studies indicate that marriages of this group tend to be unusual. College-educated people tend to marry later than the general population.<sup>47</sup> Time and financial requirements of professional preparation encourage this

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<sup>45</sup>Paul C. Glick, "A Demographer Looks at American Families," Journal of Marriage and the Family 2 (February 1975), p. 25.

<sup>46</sup>Stinnett, p. 683.

<sup>47</sup>Anderson, p. 13.

delay. These marriages are also more stable than those of the general population. Blood and Wolfe felt that education was a factor most closely related to marital satisfaction among those they studied. "Education . . . symbolizes a way of life involving a happy blend of companionship, love, understanding, and children, which at the same time provides an adequate standard of living without undue effort."<sup>48</sup> Education does not specifically change the marital patterns of this group, but it does alter the condition of existence and life style in a positive manner, therefore, improving the background circumstances for satisfying marriage.

Sorokin studied college graduates in a longitudinal study of a group of gifted children. The research indicated that a much lower rate of divorce (15.8% for men and 16.0% for women) occurred than in the same age group in the total population (20.7% for men, 22.1% for women).<sup>49</sup>

Monahan, studying divorce rates in Georgia, a state which asks educational level of all applicants for marriage licenses, writes:

It appears that the divorce rate rises and falls with educational level; from below unity at the lower educational levels, to above unity for those who complete grammar school and high school, again diminishing below unity with attendance in college or graduate.<sup>50</sup>

Reasons for this inverse relationship may be related to later

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<sup>48</sup>Robert O. Blood, Jr. and Donald M. Wolfe, Husbands and Wives, The Dynamics of Married Living (New York: The Free Press, 1960), p. 253-4.

<sup>49</sup>Thomas P. Monahan, "Educational Achievement and Family Stability," Journal of Social Psychology 55 (December 1961), p. 254.

<sup>50</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 257.

age at marriage for college-educated persons, more freedom from financial pressures for those who have more education and higher paying jobs, and greater satisfaction with life and personal achievements for this group.

An interesting analysis by Blood and Wolfe indicates that, although marital stability is greater for the college educated and marital satisfaction is higher for this group in total, marital satisfaction expressed may be lower for college-educated women. These educated wives, when interviewed, cited marital roles as a common area of disagreement. "Those who have been to college appear to be sensitive about the question of women's roles and to push for idealized husband-wife roles."<sup>51</sup>

Researchers analyzed these complaints as:

College alumnae are probably less apt to keep quiet when they disagree with their husbands, more anxious to work things through to a settlement, and more apt to recall such disagreements when interviewed subsequently.<sup>52</sup>

It may be incorrect to conclude from this statement that educated wives are always less satisfied with marriage than their less-educated peers. Perhaps more verbal skills, less fear of the researcher's role or more equalitarian feelings for the researcher or for the educated couple encouraged this group to state their dissatisfactions clearly.

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<sup>51</sup>Blood and Wolfe, p. 245.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid.

Marriages in which both husband and wife are equally educated seem to have a tendency to a more equalitarian relationship. The following table, developed in a study of mixed religious background couples, where one partner converted to the other's faith, is an example of power in decision-making, as related to educational level of the partners.

Table 2: Change in Religious Affiliation, by Comparative Education of Husband and Wife<sup>53</sup>

Direction of Change in Religious Affiliation	Comparative Education		
	Husband More	Equal	Wife More
Wife changed to husband's faith	74%	50%	27%
Husband changed to wife's faith	<u>26</u>	<u>50</u>	<u>73</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%
Number of couples	19	26	11

The partner with more education or who is older is usually dominant in decision-making in the dyad. Roles may be blurred and satisfactions more or less distinct for the educated life, depending on the educational attainments of her husband. Special problems and new satisfactions may await those who are involved in more equalitarian partnerships. The equalitarian wife who is married to a patriarchal husband is involved in a disastrous combination which is most often found among divorced couples.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>53</sup>Robert O. Blood, Jr., Marriage, (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 2nd ed., p. 208.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

Certain generally accepted concepts about the components of marital success have been outlined. Those who are college-educated have some advantages which encourage marital success. However, the impact of college training on marital satisfaction and marital stability is still an issue of debate, contradicted by research and statistics. The family is the primary educator for marital competencies. Personality characteristics, age and education have an impact on marital success. What role does family life education fill in this preparation for marital success? Can family life education verify its part in developing students' competencies for marriage and family roles? These questions remain unanswered.

## CHAPTER 3

### THE PROCEDURE

#### NEEDS

Two areas of need were analyzed at the beginning of this research. Each area related to the impact and scope of family relations instruction as formal preparation for satisfying and stable marriage. The first need was statistical. To the writer's knowledge, no numbers were available to support or deny the present success of such preparation for marriage on the college level. No comparisons have been completed for marital stability or divorce rates and marital happiness or satisfaction between those who have studied family relations and those who have not had such formal instruction.

The second area of need concerned feed-back from married graduates on the value of topic areas covered in any family living courses they had completed in college. After a period of married life, their reflections on the utility of their studies in marriage and family living could be most useful in refining course content and objectives. Such feed-back was unavailable and to the writer's knowledge had not been sought.

#### POPULATION

The population for this research was identified as a sample consisting of persons who have completed one or more marriage and family



relations courses at Eastern Illinois University since June, 1973. The control group was composed of persons of similar age who had graduated from Eastern Illinois University since June, 1973 but had not completed a marriage and family relations class on the college level.

The sample was selected from random samplings of students who have completed a marriage and family relations course since June, 1973. Two sources were used for selecting this sample. First, a list was obtained by conference with two home economics instructors responsible for marriage and family relations courses at Eastern Illinois University. Names were randomly selected from class rosters from their classes. Another list was provided by the Health Education Department. Health education majors have a recommended option in the area of marriage and family relations. This list provided names of twenty majors who had completed one or more of these courses. The final sample was selected by shuffling these names with those from the class rosters and randomly selecting 100 names.

The control group was selected with the cooperation of the Alumnae Services office at Eastern Illinois University. Random names were selected from the alumnae files of those who had since June, 1973. One hundred names were selected from these files.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE

The basic objectives of the questionnaire were:

- to provide information on marital status and family size of the sample and control groups,

- to determine marital satisfaction for each group through self-analysis,
- to provide an outlet for graduate feed-back on utility of study topics in this course area,
- to encourage honest, thoughtful responses by emphasizing confidentiality and anonymity.

The first section of the questionnaire dealt with factual data: age, sex, marital status, number of years married, number of children and number of marriage and family living courses completed on the college level. Other factual data gathered included: age at marriage, area of undergraduate major and timing of birth of the first child. Questions in the second section pertained only to those graduates who had completed a marriage and family relations course. Topics here included: time of course completion in relation to divorce, reasons for enrolling, and analysis of course subject areas as most and least useful. The final area of the questionnaire dealt with evaluation of marital satisfaction and areas of agreement and disagreement in marriage.

The instrument for measuring the areas of agreement and disagreement was adapted from a section of The Marriage and Divorce Questionnaire used by Harvey J. Locke in his famous study to predict marital adjustment. This instrument was shortened and simplified for the purpose of this analysis.

#### REFINEMENT

The questionnaire was analyzed by graduate students in a home economics evaluation class. These students filled out the instruments as

would participants, then offered suggestions for clarification and expansion of the instrument. Recommended changes were discussed and implemented. The questionnaire was expanded to cover some questions on number and timing of birth of children. The questionnaire was then evaluated by three professors on the home economics faculty. Further recommendations and improvements in printing format and length were implemented. The refined instrument was re-submitted and approved by the graduate committee. (Appendix A)

#### DATA COLLECTION

Participant names and addresses were printed on cards and numbered consecutively. The questionnaire was duplicated and copies were numbered to correspond with participant numbers so returns could be recorded.

A cover letter was developed which explained the purpose of the research and introduced the researcher. Participants were insured confidentiality and asked to respond within ten days. (Appendix A) The cover letter, a numbered questionnaire and a stamped envelope bearing the researcher's name and address were mailed to each randomly selected participant.

A follow-up postcard was mailed to each participant who had not returned the instrument within ten days. These participants were asked to complete the questionnaire and return it as soon as possible. (Appendix A) Final date for returns was ten days after mailing date of

reminder cards.

### DATA ANALYSIS

Findings for all returned questionnaires were assembled and keypunched for computation. Computer analysis of responses to each question was reported in percentage form. Comparisons between sample and control groups on some of the areas of the study were tabulated by the computer. Hand tabulation was used for some questions for a simple count of responses.

Marital stability scores were developed and compared for the two groups. Other variables such as age at marriage, number of marriage and family relations courses completed and college major were compared.

Marital satisfaction was compared in questions 16 through 32. (See Appendix, p. 83-84) Selected questions from this group were chosen for percentage comparisons between the sample and control groups. Computer computation was used to facilitate these comparisons. Individual scores were also computed for marital satisfaction using the responses in questions 22 through 32. Ratings were given point value on the following scale:

Strongly agree	+4
Agree	+2
Undecided	0
Disagree	-2
Strongly disagree	-4

Higher positive scores indicate greater satisfaction with the marriage.

Negative scores of lower value, the opposite end of the continuum, indi-

cate a greater dissatisfaction with the relationship. These scores were computed by hand and means compared for both sample and control groups for analysis of possible differences. Computer analysis of percentage responses for each of these questions was also utilized for comparison.

## CHAPTER 4

### FINDINGS

One hundred and forty-three questionnaires were returned by the closing date for the testing period. This was a return of 71.5%. Data was key-punched and tabulated manually. Findings accumulated from the data were then sorted and compared according to pre-determined patterns developed by the writer.

TABLE 1

#### PARTICIPANT AGE GROUPS

17-22 years	23-30 years	31-40 years	41+	No response
N=77 (53.8%)	N=51 (35.7%)	N=8 (5.6%)	N=5 (3.5%)	N=2 (1.4%)

Among 143 returned questionnaires, seventy-seven or 53.8% were completed by persons 17-22 years old. Fifty-one questionnaires, 35.7%, were completed by persons 23-30 years old. Persons 31-40 years old completed eight questionnaires, 5.6%. Five persons over 41, 3.5%, returned the questionnaire. Two questionnaires, 1.4%, had no age group checked.

TABLE 2

#### SEX OF PARTICIPANTS

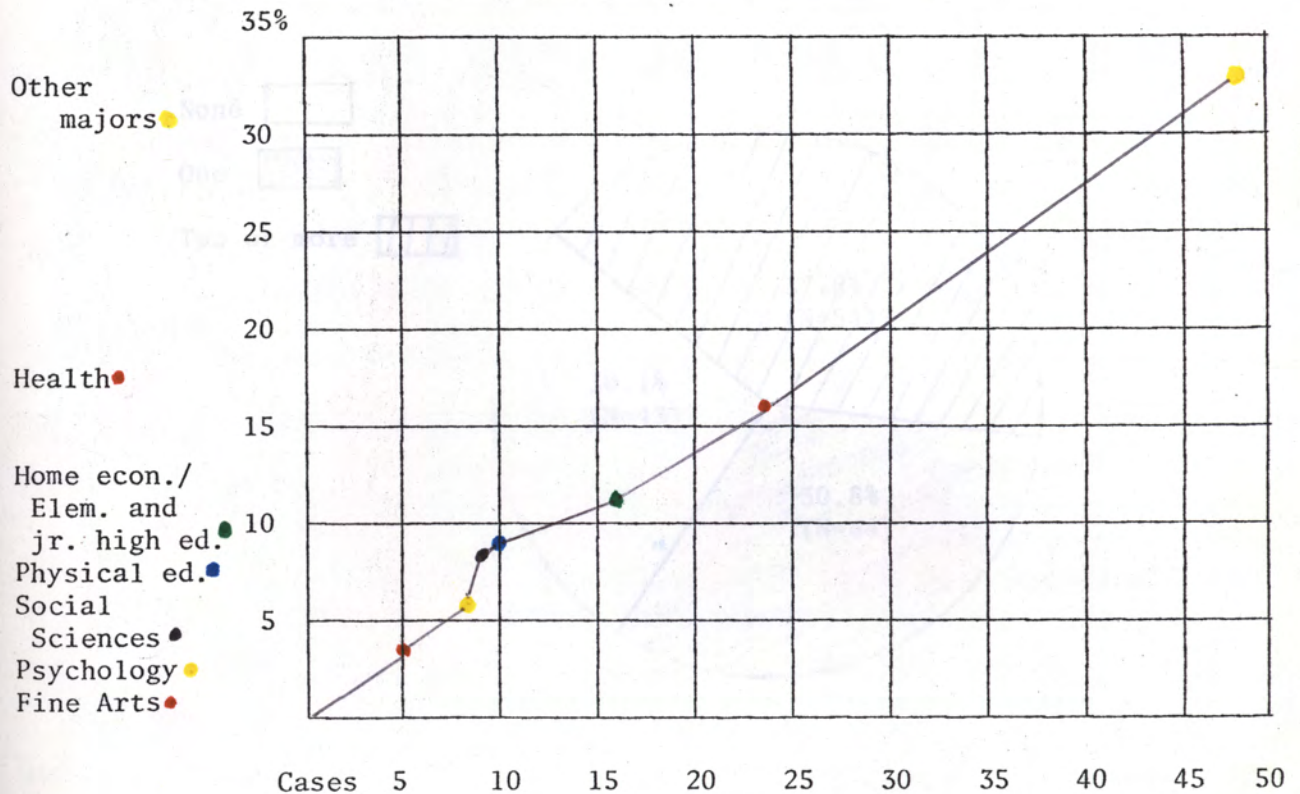
Female N=113 (79%)	Male N=27 (18.9%)	3 (2.1%) No response
--------------------	-------------------	-------------------------



Seventy-nine percent, a total of 113, of all instruments returned were completed by females. Twenty-seven males, 18.9%, returned the instrument. No response was checked for this question on three (2.1%) of the returned instruments.

TABLE 3

AREA OF UNDERGRADUATE MAJOR OF PARTICIPANTS

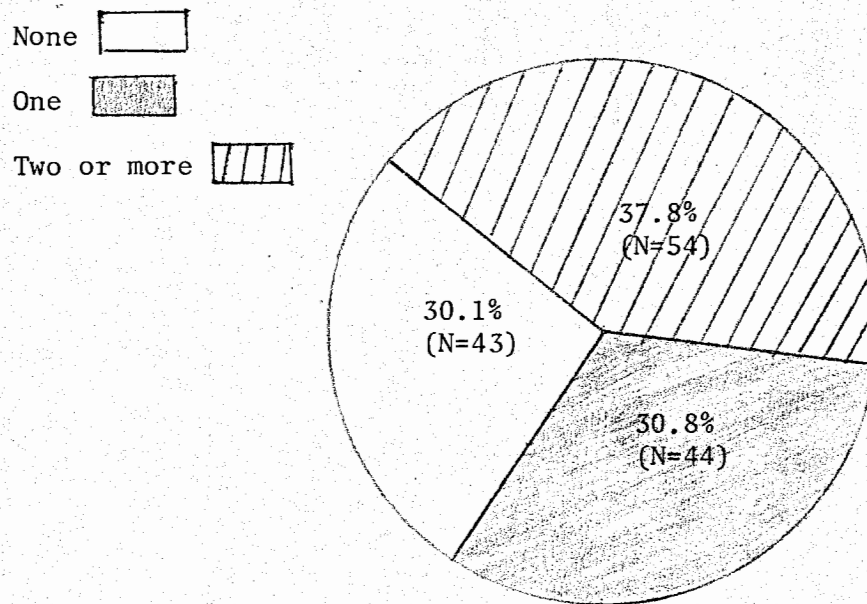


Fine arts majors completed five (3.5%) of the total returned instruments. Psychology majors completed eight (5.6%) of the total returned instruments. Nine instruments (6.3%) were returned by Social Sciences majors. Ten instruments (7%) were returned by Physical Education majors. Elementary or junior high education majors completed seventeen

instruments (11.9%). Home economics majors also completed seventeen instruments. Twenty-three instruments (16.1%) were completed by those checking Health as a major. The remaining instruments (34.3%) were completed by all other majors combined.

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF COLLEGE COURSES COMPLETED WHICH DEALT WITH  
THE SUBJECT OF MARRIAGE AND/OR FAMILY RELATIONS







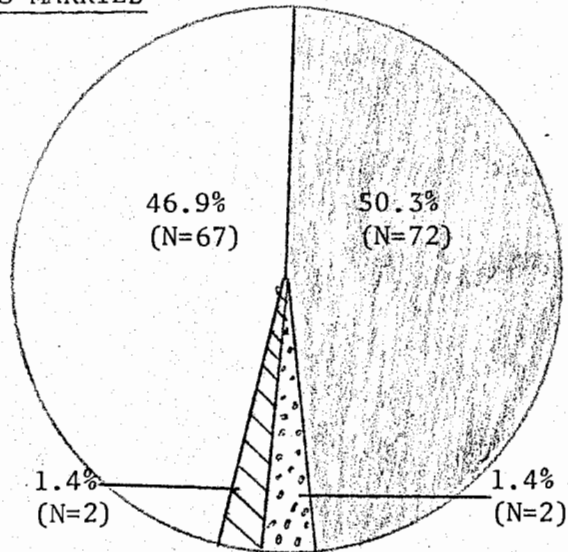
Fifty-four respondents (37.8%) had completed two or more college courses which dealt with the subject area of marriage and/or family relations. Forty-four (30.8%) had completed one course in that subject area. Forty-three (30.1%) had never completed a marriage and family relations course.



TABLE 5

NUMBER OF TIMES MARRIED





Never married   
 Married once   
 Married twice   
 Married more than 2 times 

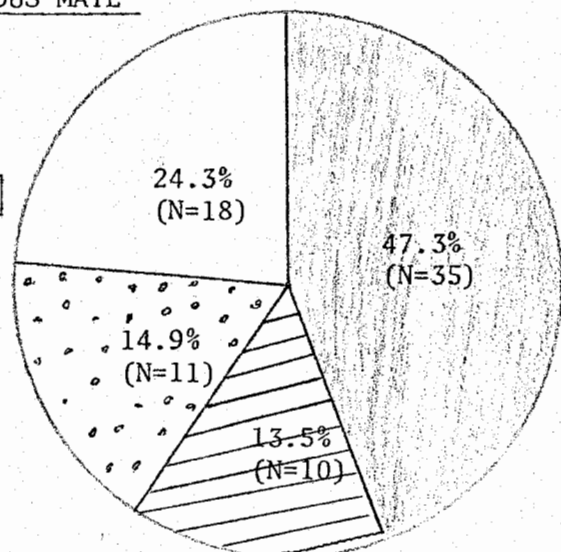


Sixty-seven of the participants (46.9%) had never married. Seventy-two (50.3%) had married once. Two participants (1.4%) had married twice, and two participants (1.4%) had married more than two times.

TABLE 6

TOTAL NUMBER OF YEARS MARRIED  
TO PRESENT OR PREVIOUS MATE

One year or less   
 More than 1 year but less than 5   
 More than 5 years but less than 10   
 More than 10 years 



Eighteen of the married participants (24.3%) had been married one year or less. Thirty-five of the married group (47.3%) had been married more than one year but less than five years. Ten participants (13.5%) had been married more than five years but less than ten years. Eleven participants (14.9%) had been married more than ten years.

TABLE 7

AGE AT TIME OF FIRST MARRIAGE

10.8% N=8	66.2% N=49	23% N=17	No response N=2
14-18 yr.	19-21 yr.	22-27 yr.	No response

Eight married participants (10.8%) had married first between ages 14 and 18. Forty-nine participants (66.2%) had married between ages 19 and 21. Seventeen participants (23%) had married between ages 22 and 27. Two married participants did not respond to this question.

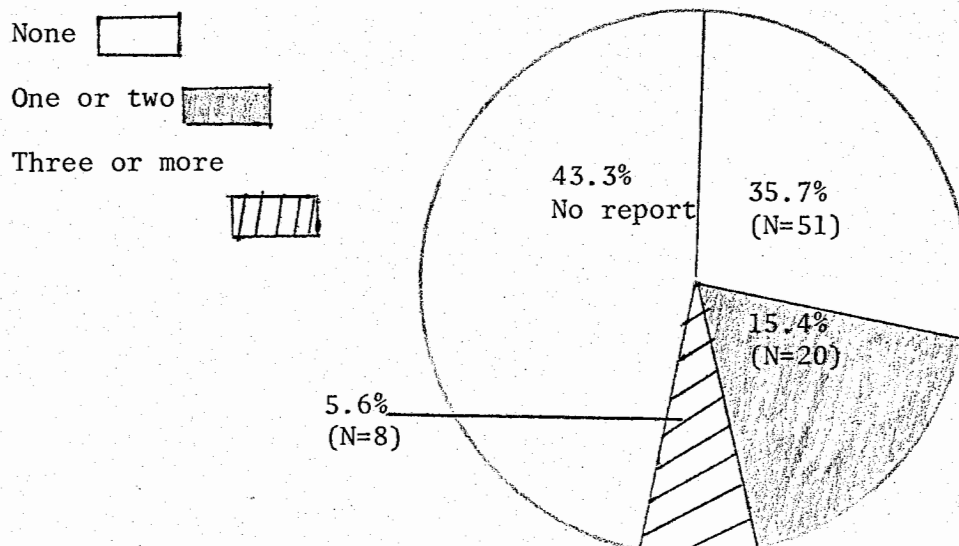
TABLE 8

PARTICIPANT DIVORCE STATISTICS

Number divorces	8 (5.6%)
Number divorced more than one time	0
Time of enrollment in a family relations course	
Before first divorce	3 (37.5%)
After first divorce	4 (50%)
Never had a family relations course	<u>3 (37.5%)</u>
TOTAL	10*

Eight participants (5.6%) had been divorced. None reported more than one divorce. Three divorced participants (37.5%) had completed a marriage and family relations course before divorce. Four (50%) checked completing a marriage and family relations course after divorce. \*(Two respondents had completed two marriage and family courses, one before and one after divorce.) Three divorced participants (37.5%) had never completed a college level marriage and family relations course.


TABLE 9


NUMBER OF CHILDREN REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS


Fifty-one participants (35.7%) reported having no children. Sixty-two respondents (43.3%) did not answer this question. This may be interpreted as a "none" response made by those who read only the question and did not read the options. Twenty-two (15.4%) participants had one or two children. Eight participants (5.6%) had three or more children.

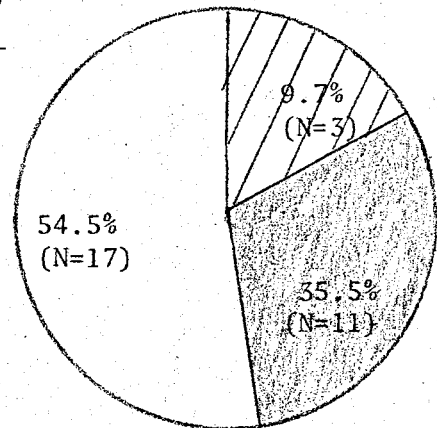
TABLE 10

TIMING OF BIRTH OF FIRST CHILD  
AS REPORTED BY PARTICIPANTS

Before marriage 

Within first year of marriage 

During second year or later 



Of all participants responding to the question, "When was your first child born?" (N=31), three participants (9.7%) had children born before marriage. Eleven children (35.7%) had been born during the first year of marriage. Seventeen children (54.8%) had been born during the second year of marriage or later.

TABLE 11

REASON FOR ENROLLING IN MARRIAGE  
AND FAMILY RELATIONS COURSE

	Number	Percentage
Required in major	30	30.6%
An elective related to major	26	26.5%
Sounded interesting or useful	30	30.6%
Recommended by a friend	3	3.0%
Other reason	4	4.0%

Among all participants who had completed one or more marriage and family relations courses, thirty (30.6%) had enrolled because the course was required in their major. Twenty-six (26.5%) had enrolled because the class was an elective related to their major. The reason for enrollment of thirty participants (30.6%) was the course sounded interesting or useful. For three participants (3%), the course was recommended by a friend. Four participants (4%) had enrolled for other reasons.

TABLE 12

STUDY TOPICS IN MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS CHECKED AS  
"MOST USEFUL," "LEAST USEFUL," AND "COULD HAVE BEEN  
EMPHASIZED OR FURTHER EXPLAINED" BY PARTICIPANTS  
ACCORDING TO MARITAL STATUS

Ratings	Divorced N=8			Married N=76			Single N=67		
	Most Use- ful	Least Use- ful	Needs Empha- sis	Most Use- ful	Least Use- ful	Needs Empha- sis	Most Use- ful	Least Use- ful	Needs Empha- sis
Dating prac- tices		4			26		2	16	
Premarital sexual relations		1		4	5	1	6	4	3
Diff. Family patterns in other cultures		5		1	16	2		16	1
Wedding customs and etiquette		3		1	28			15	2
Roles in marriage	3		1	22		6	13	3	5
Maintaining the relationship	2		3	22	1	8	14	1	12

TABLE 12, continued

Ratings	Divorced			Married			Single		
	Most Use- ful	Least Use- ful	Needs Empha- sis	Most Use- ful	Least Use- ful	Needs Empha- sis	Most Use- ful	Least Use- ful	Needs Empha- sis
Mate selection			1	1	6	3	3	4	5
Mixed marriage		4		1	12			6	4
Love	1			2	1	2	2		3
Sex in marriage	1			12		4	8	2	7
Circumstantial personal readi. for marriage	2		2	11		12	15		6
Engagement				1	9	1		12	
Handling family finances	1			15		10	10	2	8
Quarreling in marriage	5		1	18	1	10	6		10
In-laws		1			13	8		16	
Effect of children on marriage	3		1	11	1	18	8		10
Divorce					4	10		3	5
Contraception				12	2	9	13	3	2

Participants were asked to classify study topics in the subject area of marriage and family relations by checking three topics they found most useful in their experience, three topics they found least useful and three topics they felt needed further explanation or more emphasis.

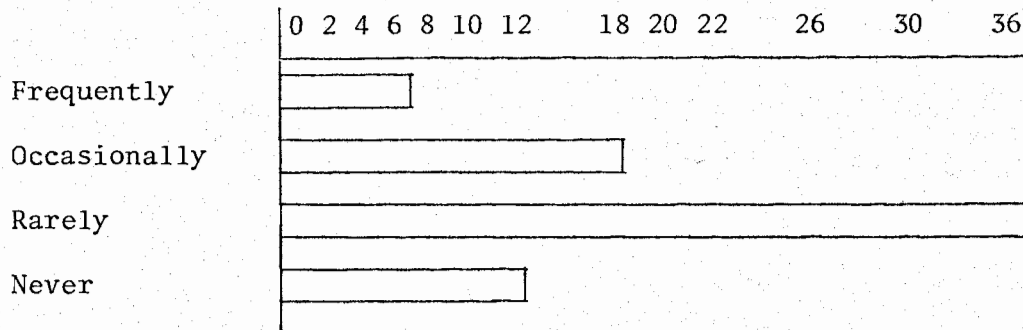
Data was separated into responses made by divorced, married and single participants. Three topics found to be most useful by those who were divorced were quarreling in marriage, roles in marriage and the effect of children on a marriage. Three topics found most useful by married participants were roles in marriage, maintaining the relationship and quarreling in marriage. Single participants selected circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage, roles in marriage and contraception as most useful topics.

Divorced participants selected as least useful topics the following: different family patterns in other cultures, dating practices and mixed marriages. Three least useful topics selected by married participants were wedding customs and etiquette, dating practices and in-laws. Single participants checked dating practices, different family patterns in other cultures and in-laws as least useful topics.

Topics which needed emphasis or explanation as selected by divorced participants were maintaining the relationship, circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage. Handling family finances and quarreling in marriage, effect of children on a marriage and circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage were topics to be emphasized selected by married participants. Single participants checked maintaining the relationship, quarreling in marriage and the effect of children on a marriage as topics which most needed further emphasis.

TABLE 13

MARRIED PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES TO QUESTION  
"Have you ever wished you had not married?"



Married participants were asked to respond to the question, "Have you ever wished you had not married?". Six participants (8.3%) frequently wished they had not married. Eighteen participants (25%) occasionally wished they had not married. Thirty-six participants (50%) rarely wished they had not married. Twelve participants (16.7%) never wished they had not married.

TABLE 14

MARRIED PARTICIPANTS RESPONSES TO QUESTION  
 AND OPTIONS  
"If you had your life to live over again would you:"

	%	0	25	50	75
Marry the same person(s)		N=46			
Marry a different person		N=5			
Not marry at all		N=5			
Live with a person unmarried		N=3			
Does not apply/Do not want to respond		N=14			



Responses were tabulated for all married participants to the question, "If you had your life to live over again would you:". Forty-six responses (63%) checked that they would marry the same person(s). Five participants (6.8%) would marry a different person. Five participants (6.8%) would not marry at all. Three participants (4.1%) would live with a person unmarried. Fourteen married participants (19.1%) chose not to respond to this question.

TABLE 15

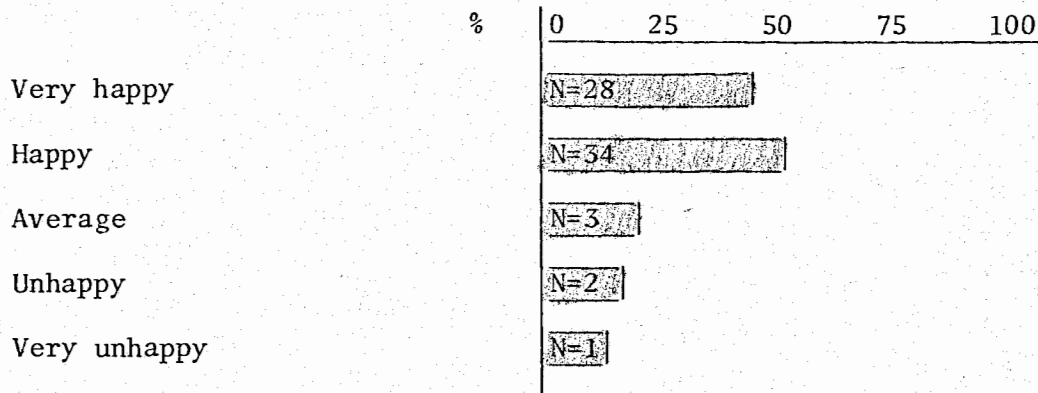
MARRIED PARTICIPANT RATINGS OF HAPPINESS OF PRESENT MARRIAGE

	%	0	25	50	75	100
Very happy		N=28				
Happy		N=32				
Average		N=3				
Unhappy		N=2				
Very unhappy		N=1				
No response		N=2				

Married participants were asked to rate the happiness of their present marriage. Twenty-eight participants (42.4%) rated their marriage as very happy. Thirty-two participants (48.5%) rated their marriage as happy. Three responses (4.5%) rated their marriages as average. Two participants (2.9%) checked their marriage as unhappy and one participant (1.5%) rated his marriage as very unhappy.

TABLE 16

MARRIED PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION  
"How happy do you think your present mate would rate your marriage?"



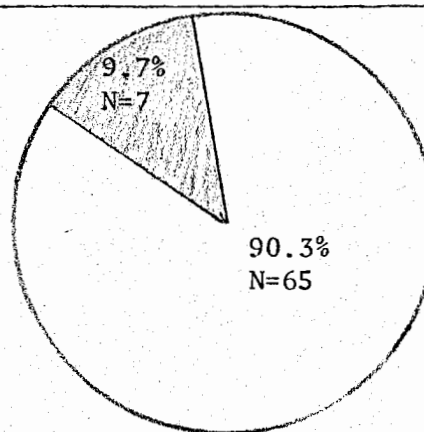
Participants were asked to check how they thought their present mate would rate their marriage. Twenty-eight participants (41.2%) thought their mate would rate the marriage as very happy. Thirty-four participants (50%) thought their spouse would rate their marriage as happy. Three participants (4.4%) thought their spouses would rate the marriage as average. Two participants (2.9%) checked their spouses' rating as unhappy. One participant (1.5%) felt his spouse would rate the marriage as very unhappy.

TABLE 17

MARRIED PARTICIPANTS' RESPONSES TO QUESTION  
 "How many times have you left your spouse or your spouse left you  
 for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict?"

No times ☐

One or more times ☒



Sixty-five married participants (90.3%) responded as never having left their spouse or their spouse left them for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict. Seven participants (9.7%) had at some time left their spouse or their spouse had left them for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict.

TABLE 18

MARRIED PARTICIPANTS' REPORTED CHANGE IN ATTITUDE  
 TOWARD MARRIAGE AS COMPARED WITH EXPECTATIONS BEFORE MARRIAGE

	%	0	25	50
Much better than I thought it would be	N=14			
Only slightly better than I thought it would be	N=16			
About what I expected, no better or worse	N=30			
Slightly disappointing	N=6			
Extremely disappointing, not at all what I expected	N=6			

Participants were asked to check the statement which best described their change in attitude toward marriage at this time as compared with their expectations before marriage. Fourteen married participants (19.4%) reported their marriage as much better than they thought it would be. Sixteen (22%) checked their marriage as only slightly better than they thought it would be. Thirty married participants (41.7%) rated their marriage as about what they expected, no better or worse. Six respondents (8.3%) thought their marriage was slightly disappointing. Six other participants (8.3%) felt their marriage was extremely disappointing, not at all what they had expected.

TABLE 19

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES TO AMOUNT OF AGREEMENT  
OR DISAGREEMENT IN THEIR MARRIAGE ON TEN DIFFERENT AREAS

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Un- decided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Handling family finances	20.3%	60.8%	0	10.8%	8.1%
Matters of recreation	12.2%	58.1%	14.9%	12.2%	2.7%
Religious matters	31.1%	41.9%	14.9%	8.1%	4.1%
Demonstration of affection	11.2%	28.0%	4.2%	6.3%	1.4%
Friends	25.7%	56.8%	5.4%	8.1%	4.1%
Sexual relations	36.1%	44.4%	9.7%	6.9%	2.8%
Ways of dealing with in-laws	27.8%	51.4%	8.3%	9.7%	2.8%

TABLE 19, continued

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Un- decided	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The amount of time that should be spent together	25.7%	48.6%	13.5%	6.8%	5.4%
Table manners and cleanliness	33.8%	54.1%	6.8%	5.4%	-----
Conventionality	23.0%	59.5%	12.2%	4.1%	1.4%
Aims, goals and things believed to be im- portant in life	41.1%	35.6%	8.2%	8.2%	6.8%

Married participants were asked to check the statement which best described the extent of agreement or disagreement between them and their spouses during marriage on several topics. Handling family finances was a subject on which 20.3% (15) strongly agreed, 58.1% (45) agreed, 10.8% (8) disagreed and 8.1% (6) strongly disagreed.

Nine participants (12.2%) were strongly agreed on matters of recreation in their marriage. On this topic, forty-three participants (58.1%) agreed, nine (12.2%) disagreed and two (2.7%) strongly disagreed. Eleven participants (14.9%) were undecided.

Twenty-three respondents (31.1%) had strong agreement in their marriage on religious matters. Thirty-one (41.9%) agreed on religious matters, six (8.1%) disagreed about religious matters and three (4.1%) strongly disagreed on this topic. Eleven participants (14.9%) were undecided.

Demonstration of affection was an area of strong agreement for sixteen participants (11.2%). Forty participants (28%) agreed about demonstration of affection in marriage. Nine (6.3%) disagreed on this topic and two participants (1.4%) had strong disagreement on demonstration of affection in their marriage. Six participants (4.2%) were undecided on this subject.

Nineteen participants (25.7%) checked strong agreement about friends. Forty-two (56.8%) agreed on the subject of friends. Six marriages (8.1%) disagreed about friends and three (4.1%) strongly disagreed about friends. Four participants (5.4%) were undecided.

Sexual relations was an area of strong agreement for twenty-six (36.1%) of the married participants. Thirty-two marriages (44.4%) agreed on sexual relations. Disagreement on sexual relations occurred in five marriages (6.9%) and two marriages (2.8%) strongly disagreed on sexual relations. Seven participants (9.7%) were undecided on this topic.

Twenty participants (27.8%) strongly agreed on ways of dealing with in-laws. Thirty-seven marriages (51.4%) agreed on this topic. Seven respondents checked disagreement in their marriage on in-law matters and two respondents (2.8%) had strong disagreement in their marriage on ways of dealing with in-laws. Six respondents (8.3%) were undecided.

The amount of time that should be spent together was an area of strong agreement for nineteen respondents (25.7%). Thirty-six re-

sponding marriages (48.6%) agreed on the amount of time which should be spent together. Five marriages (6.8%) disagreed on this topic and four marriages (5.4%) strongly disagreed on this topic. Ten respondents (13.5%) were undecided.

Table manners and cleanliness was an area of strong agreement for twenty-five marriages (33.8%). Forty marriages (54.1%) agreed on this topic. Four marriages (5.4%) disagreed about table manners and cleanliness. Five respondents (6.8%) were undecided.

Seventeen marriages (23%) had strong agreement on conventionality. Forty-four marriages (59.5%) agreed on conventionality. Three respondents (4.1%) checked disagreement on this topic and one respondent (1.4%) had strong disagreement on conventionality. Nine respondents (12.2%) were undecided.

Aims, goals and things believed to be important in life was an area of strong agreement in marriage for thirty (41.1%) of the respondents. Twenty-six respondents (35.6%) reported agreement in their marriage on this topic. Six marriages (8.2%) had disagreement on aims, goals and things believed to be important in life. Five marriages (6.8%) strongly disagreed on this topic. Six respondents (8.2%) were undecided.

TABLE 20

MARITAL SATISFACTION SCORES AS COMPUTED FOR PARTICIPANTS FROM RESPONSES #22-32, COMPARED WITH NUMBER OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED (see Chap. III p. 28)

	Number in group	Average Score	Median Score	Range of scores
No courses completed	19	+16	+18	+36/-26
One course completed	25	+21.2	+24	+34/-20
Two or more courses	31	+20.7	+20	+40/-18

Marital satisfaction scores were computed for participants from their responses to question #22-32. These scores were then grouped according to the number of marriage and family relations courses a participant had completed. Nineteen participants had never completed a marriage and family relations course. Their average score was +16, with a median score of +18. The range of scores in this group was +36 to -26.

Twenty-five participants had completed one marriage and family relations course. Their average marital satisfaction score was +21.2, with a median score of +24. Range of scores in this group was +34 to -20.

Thirty-one participants had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses. Their average score was +20.7 with a median score of +20. Range of scores for marital satisfaction in this group ranged from +40 to -18.



TABLE 21

PARTICIPANTS RANKED BY PRESENT AGE, MARITAL STATUS AND  
NUMBER OF FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED

Number of courses completed		Never married			Married once			Married twice		
		0	1	2+	0	1	2+	0	1	2+
Present age 41 or older	M	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
	F	0	0	0	3	0	1	0	0	1
Present age 31-40	M	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0
	F	0	0	0	1	1	4	0	0	0
Present age 23-30	M	0	1	1	2	5	2	0	0	0
	F	11	2	3	6	9	8	0	1	0
Present age 17-22	M	5	1	5	1	1	1	0	0	0
	F	9	14	15	4	9	11	0	0	0

Participants' age groups were tabulated with marital status, sex, and number of family relations courses completed. In the 17-22 age group, five men and nine women had never married and had completed no family relations courses. One man and fourteen women had never married and had completed one marriage and family relations course. Five single men and fifteen single women had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses. One man and four women in the 17-22 age group had been married once and had completed no college course in marriage and family relations. In this age group, one man and nine women who had married had completed one marriage and family relations course. One man and eleven women in the 17-22 age group had married once and

had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses. No one in this age group had married twice.

Among those age 23-30, eleven women and no men had remained unmarried and had completed no marriage and family relations courses. Two women and one man who had never married had completed one marriage course. Three women and man who had never married had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses. In this same age group, six women and two men had married once and had never completed a marriage and family relations course. Five men and nine women had married once and had completed one marriage and family relations class. Two men and eight women had married once and had completed two or more of these classes. Only one woman in this age group, who had completed one marriage and family course, had been married twice.

In the 31-40 age group, all participants married at some time. One man and woman who had married once had never completed a marriage and family relations class. Only one woman had married once and completed one marriage and family relations course. One man and four women had married once and had completed two or more marriage and family relations classes. No participants in this age group had married twice.

Among those 41 and older, all respondents had married at some time. No men in this age group responded. Three women had married once and never completed a marriage and family relations class. One woman had married once and had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses. One woman had married twice and had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses.

TABLE 22

DIVORCED PARTICIPANTS CLASSIFIED ACCORDING TO AGE AT MARRIAGE  
AND PERIOD OF MARITAL CYCLE WHEN FAMILY RELATIONS CLASS WAS COMPLETED

	Enrolled before divorce	%	Enrolled after divorce	%	No course completed	%
Age at first marriage 22-27	0	0	0	0	1	12.5
Age at first marriage 19-21	1	12.5	1	12.5	1	12.5
Age at first marriage 14-18	1	12.5	2	25	1	12.5

Divorced participant data on age at marriage was compared with the period of marital cycle when a family relations course was completed. Eight respondents composed the divorced group. Among those age 14-18 at the time of first marriage, one (12.5%) had enrolled in a marriage and family course before divorce. Two divorced participants (25%) who married between ages 14-18 had enrolled in a family course after the divorce. One divorced participant (12.5%) who had married between ages 14 and 18 years had never completed a marriage and family relations course.

One participant (12.5%), age 19-21 at first marriage, had enrolled in a marriage and family course before divorce. One divorced participant (12.5%) married between age 19 and 21 had enrolled in a marriage and family course after divorce. Another divorced participant married at that age had never completed a marriage and family course.

One divorced participant (12.5%) had first married between ages 22-27. This participant had never completed a marriage and family relations course.

TABLE 23  
PARTICIPANTS COMPARED BY MAJOR, MARITAL STATUS AND  
NUMBER OF FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED

Number of courses	Never Married			Married Once			Married Twice		
	0	1	2+	0	1	2+	0	1	2+
Home economics	0	0	1	0	5	9	0	0	1
Health	1	8	14	0	0	2	0	0	0
Social sciences	1	0	2	1	4	3	0	0	0
Elem. or jr. high educ.	6	1	2	5	0	3	0	0	0
Fine arts	5	0	0	1	0	2	0	0	0
Physical education	1	1	2	2	3	0	0	0	0
Ind. arts or technology	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Guidance and counseling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Psychology	1	0	0	0	3	4	0	0	0
Other majors	10	7	3	10	9	6	0	1	0

All participants were compared by college major, marital status and number of family relations courses completed. Among home economics majors responding, one participant had never married and had completed two or more family relations courses. Five home economics majors had

married once and had completed a family relations course, while nine home economists had completed two or more family relations courses and had married once. One home economics major had completed two or more family relations courses and had married twice.

Twenty-three health majors had never married. In this group, one participant had never completed a marriage and family relations course, eight had completed one course and fourteen unmarried health majors had completed two or more family relations courses. Two health majors had married once and had completed two or more courses.

Three social sciences majors had never married. One participant in this group had never completed a family relations course and two had completed two or more courses. Eight social science majors had married once. In this group, one had never completed a family relations course, four had completed one course and three social sciences majors had married once and had completed two or more marriage courses.

Seventeen elementary or junior high education majors reported. Nine in this group had never married. Six participants who had never married had never completed a marriage and family relations course, one had never married and had completed one course and two had never married and had completed two courses. Five elementary and junior high education majors had married once and had completed no marriage and family courses. Three members of the "Married once group" had completed two or more courses.

Eight fine arts majors responded to the questionnaire. Five

had never married and had never completed a marriage and family relations course. One fine arts major had married once and never had a family relations course and two participants in this major area had married once and had completed two or more courses.

Nine physical education majors responded to the questionnaire. Among four who had never married, one had never completed a family course, one had completed one family course and two had completed two or more courses. Two physical education majors had married once and had never completed a marriage and family relations course while three physical education majors had completed one family relations course and had married once.

No majors in the areas of industrial arts or technology or guidance and counseling had responded to the questionnaire.

Eight psychology majors responded. One psychology major had never married and had never completed a marriage and family relations course. Three psychology majors had married once and had completed one family relations course, and four psychology majors had married once and had completed two or more courses.

Forty-six persons in other, scattered majors responded to the questionnaire. Ten participants in this group had never married and had completed no marriage and family relations courses. Seven of this unmarried group had completed one family relations course and three had completed two or more courses. Ten participants in this mixed group had married once and had completed no family relations courses. Nine had

married once and had completed one course and six had married once and had completed two or more courses. One participant in the mixed major group had married twice and had completed one or more family relations courses.

TABLE 24

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE TO QUESTION  
 "Have you ever wished you had not married?"  
 COMPARED BY NUMBER OF FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED

	Frequently	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
Two or more courses	2 (7%)	8 (27%)	16 (53%)	3 (10%)
One course	1 (4%)	6 (25%)	14 (58%)	4 (17%)
No courses	3 (16%)	4 (21%)	6 (32%)	6 (32%)

All participant responses to the question, "Have you ever wished you had not married?" were compared by the number of family relations courses the participant had completed. Among those who had completed two or more courses, two (7%) frequently wished they had never married. Eight participants who had completed two or more courses wish occasionally that they had never married. Sixteen participants in this group (53%) rarely wished they had never married and three (30%) never regretted their marriage decision.

One participant who had completed one marriage and family course frequently wished he had never married. Six who had completed one course (25%) occasionally wished they had never married. Fourteen participants

(58%) in this group rarely wished they had never married. Four persons (17%) never wished they had not married.

Among those who had never completed a marriage and family course, three (16%) frequently wished they had never married. Four (21%) occasionally wished they had never married. Six participants (32%) who had never had a family living course rarely regretted their marriage decision. Six (32%) in this group never wished they had not married.

TABLE 25

PARTICIPANTS CHECKED OPTIONS TO THE QUESTION,  
"If you had your life to live over again would you:"  
COMPARED BY NUMBER OF FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED

Number of courses completed	0	1	2+
a. Marry the same person	63%	66%	60%
b. Marry a different person	0%	8%	10%
c. Not marry at all	10%	12%	0%
d. Live with a person unmarried	5%	4%	3%
e. Does not apply/Don't want to respond	16%	12%	23%

Married participant responses to the question, "If you had your life to live over again would you?" were compared by the number of family relations courses the participants had completed. Among those who had completed no family relations courses, 63% (12) would marry the same person. No one in this group would marry a different



person. Ten percent (2) would not marry at all. Five percent (1) who had no instruction in family relations would live with a person unmarried. Three chose not to reply.

In the group of participants who had completed one marriage and family course, sixty-six percent (16) would marry the same person. Eight percent (2) would marry a different person. Twelve percent (3) would not marry at all. Four percent (1) would live with a person unmarried. Three participants in this group chose not to respond.

Sixty percent (18) of the group completing two or more marriage and family relations courses would marry the same person again. Ten percent of this group (3) would marry a different person. No one would choose not to marry at all. Three percent (1) would live with a person unmarried. Twenty-three percent (7) chose not to respond to this question.

TABLE 26

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE TO QUESTION,  
 "How happy would you rate your present marriage?"  
 COMPARED BY NUMBER OF FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED

Number of courses	0	1	2+
a. Very happy	21.5%	45.0%	43.0%
b. Happy	58.0%	41.6%	36.6%
c. Average	0	8.3%	3.3%
d. Unhappy	0	8.3%	0
e. Very unhappy	5.3%	0	0

Participant responses to the question, "How happy would you rate your present marriage?" were compared with the number of marriage and family relations courses a participant had completed. Among those who had completed no family relations courses, 21.5% (4) rated their marriage as very happy. Fifty-eight percent (11) of this group felt their marriage was happy. No one in this group rated their marriage as average or unhappy. Five point three percent (1) rated their marriage as very unhappy.

Among those completing one marriage and family relations courses, 45% (11) felt their marriage was very happy. Two participants (8.3%) rated their marriage as average. Two (8.3%) rated their marriage as unhappy. No one rated their marriage as very unhappy.

Forty-three percent (13) of those completing two or more family relations courses rated their marriage as very happy. Eleven (36.6%) in this group rated their marriage as happy. One participant (3.3%) in this group rated his marriage as average. No participants who had completed two or more courses rated their marriage as unhappy or very unhappy.

TABLE 27

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE TO QUESTION, "How happy do you think your present mate would rate your relationship?"

Number of courses	0	1	2+
a. Very happy	36.8%	37.5%	43.3%
b. Happy	47.3%	54.0%	36.6%
c. Average	0	4.0%	6.6%
d. Unhappy	0	8.3%	0
e. Very unhappy	5.3%	0	0

Participant responses to the question, "How happy do you think your present mate would rate your relationship?" were compared with the number of marriage and family relations courses the participants had completed. Among those who had completed no marriage and family relations courses, seven participants (36.8%) rated their mate's opinion of the relationship as very happy. Nine participants (47.3%) in this group felt their mate would rate the relationship as happy. No one in this group checked average or unhappy ratings for the relationship. One participant (5.3%) rated the mate's opinion of the marriage as very unhappy.

Nine participants (37.5%) in the group completing one marriage and family relations course checked their mate's rating as very happy. Thirteen members of this group (54%) thought their mate would rate the marriage as happy. One participant (4%) thought his mate would rate the marriage as average and two participants (8.3%) felt their mates'

rating of the relationship would be "unhappy".

Among those who had completed two or more marriage and family relations classes, thirteen (43.3%) felt their mate would rate their relationship as very happy. Eleven (36.6%) thought the mate's rating would be "happy" and two (6.6%) felt their mates would rate their relationship as average.

TABLE 28

PARTICIPANT RESPONSE TO QUESTION, "How often have you left your spouse or your spouse left you for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict?" COMPARED BY NUMBER OF FAMILY RELATIONS COURSES COMPLETED

Number of courses completed	0	1	2+
No times	89.4%	91.6%	86.6%
One or more times	5.3%	8.3%	10.0%

Participant responses to the question, "How often have you left your spouse or your spouse left you for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict?" were compared by the number of marriage and family relations courses the participant had completed. Among those who had completed no family relations courses, 89.4% (17) had never left because of conflict. One participant in this group (5.3%) had left one or more times because of conflict.

For those who had completed one marriage and family relations class, 91.6% (22) had never left their spouse because of conflict. Two

participants in this group (8.3%) had left at some time because of conflict.

Twenty-six (86.6%) of those who had completed two or more marriage and family relations courses had never left their spouse because of conflict. Three participants in this group (10%) had at some time left their spouse because of conflict.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Results of this research were largely determined by young females. Participants were primarily under thirty years of age (89.5%) and seventy-nine percent of all respondents were female. The age stratification of this study is a result of the limited age variation of college populations and the short period of college graduation dates used in selecting the study population. The increased percentage of female respondents may be a reflection of women's presumed interest in studies in the area of family relations. Also, more women than men tend to enroll in family relations courses and therefore form a larger percentage of the randomly selected sample.

A wide variety of undergraduate majors completed the questionnaire. The larger groups were those whose major area required or recommended enrollment in a family relations course for graduation. Interest in completing and returning the questionnaire was highest in these groups.

The entire sample was roughly divided between those who had completed no family relations classes (30.1%), those who had completed one course (30.8%) and those who had completed two or more family relations courses (37.8%).

A large percentage of the research population (46.9%) had never married. Because no complete data is available in university records on

each graduate's marital status, it was difficult to isolate a sampling of married persons for this study. This information may be volunteered for alumni records but it is not mandatory, nor is it regularly up-dated. No permanent class rosters are maintained by the university, or by all individual teachers, which tabulate marital statistics on students. A higher percentage of married participants is difficult to insure from random selection but might be more common in a study of participants of a slightly older age range.

Similarly, a slightly older group might include more members who had married two or more times. For this study, only 2.8% of all participants had married two or more times.

A wide distribution of number of years married was represented by participants. The sample population married more than one year but less than five years formed the largest group (47.3%). The next largest percentage of married participants (24.3%) had been married one year or less. Participants married over five years composed 28.4% of the studied population. The largest percentage of married participants had married at college age (66.2% between ages 19-21). Another significantly large group (10.8%) had married between ages 14 and 18. These two groups formed the largest total percentage (77%), married between the ages most cautionary for marital success, according to Schoen.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>Schoen, p. 555.

Eight participants (5.6%) had divorced at some time in their lives, a percentage significantly below the total population divorce rate which is now 10.1%.<sup>57</sup> Five divorced participants had never completed a family relations course before their divorce. A significant difference exists between the number of family relations courses completed and divorce occurrence. A significant difference exists in divorce rate between groups who have completed a family relations course before divorce was sought and those who completed no course in family relations before or during marriage.

Statistics for those answering questions on children in their marriage and time of birth of the first child were not significant. Error in question format caused 43.3% of all participants to respond in an incomplete manner to the question concerning number of children. Twenty-eight participants reported the timing of the birth of their first child. Seventeen children (54.5%) were born during the second year of marriage or later. Three children (9.7%) were born before the parents' marriage, a percentage which seems unusually large. This would seem to indicate an unexpected degree of frankness about illegitimacy among these college-educated participants plus an increased acceptance of this occurrence in an age of more sexual license. Eleven children (35.5%) were born during the first year of marriage. No responses were requested concerning pregnancy or illegitimacy as a reason for marriage.

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<sup>57</sup> Scott, p. 8.



Family relations courses are recommended or required as graduation requirements in some major areas. For this study, those areas were home economics studies and health education. However, it should be noted that a large percentage of those who enrolled in a family relations course enrolled because the course sounded interesting or useful or had been recommended by a friend. This may be interpreted to indicate students' curiosity or need for family relations instruction which they felt could be met by enrollment in such a course.

Graduates indicate some interesting emphases in family living courses according to their own experience. All participants, married, divorced or single, selected roles in marriage as a most useful topic. Those who had divorced felt quarreling and the effect of children on a marriage were very important topics, presumably because these were areas of concern in their marital experience. Handling quarrels was also important to those who were married, as was maintaining the relationship, a topic which had no relevance for those now divorced by which indicates an emphasis on longevity of the marital partnership for those still married. Single participants indicated circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage as useful from their current viewpoint. Contraception was also checked as a most useful topic by those who were single, perhaps because it is an area they now view as very critical to successful marriage or because it has a useful significance for them as single persons in modern society.

All participants felt dating practices were a "least useful"

topic. Single and divorced participants found studying different family patterns in other cultures to be a least useful area of study. Married and single participants found little benefit in in-law studies and divorced participants found mixed marriages to be a least useful study. Married participants felt wedding customs and etiquette were least useful topics.

Analysis of these areas of study can provide some re-direction for family relations classes. All participants seem to prefer those topics which have immediate daily application to their life. Therefore, dating practices are not as significant a study as roles in marriage. Wedding etiquette, according to the responses received, seemed least useful but a discussion of how to deal with conflicts such as quarreling had a practical application, in retrospect. A surprising similarity existed among the choices of topics by all three groups, indicating perhaps that these selected topics fill or deny basic human needs in modern society. The researcher feels it may be particularly important, however, to note that those who were divorced viewed the effect that children have on a marriage as a topic deserving more intense study. Perhaps emphasis on this topic for the purpose of examining stereotypes, motivations for parenthood and introduction of research findings on parents and marriage could be extremely useful for those married or contemplating marriage. Preparation of reasonable expectations in this area may also be fundamental to anticipated success in marriage.

Great similarity was also found among the three groups: divorced,

married, and single participants, when checking the areas which needed further emphasis or explanation in family relations courses. Both married and divorced participants felt circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage should be emphasized. (Single participants earlier checked this topic as one most useful.) Divorced and single participants felt maintaining the relationship should be emphasized, again an area earlier checked by married participants as most useful. Married participants checked the section "quarreling in marriage" as most useful and as a topic needing greater emphasis and clarification. The effect of children on a marriage received a similar response. Married participants alone felt handling family finances was an area which needed emphasis.

A comparison of responses tabulated in Tables 13, 14, 15, 16 and 17 reveals some significant data. Over 33% of all married participants frequently or occasionally wished they had not married. However, sixty-three percent of all participants would marry the same person again if they had their life to live over. Only 10.9% of the participants would not marry at all or would live with a person unmarried if facing this decision again. The author interprets this data as indicating a general satisfaction among this college population with marriage as an institution which can satisfy some of their human needs. On a day to day basis, however, married participants felt that frequent to occasional disillusionment resulted from the pressures and responsibilities of the marital relationship. Reasonable satisfaction is expressed toward mate choice by 63% who would choose the same mate again.

Respondents overwhelmingly checked their rating of the happiness of their marriage as identical to their mate's probable rating. "Happy" or "very happy" was the rating checked by 90.9% of the respondents. Comparing this percentage, the responses of over one-third of the participants who frequently or occasionally wished they had not married, this may be significant in several respects. First, social pressure for a happy marriage may be so great that participants feel a compulsion to constantly indicate happiness in their marital state. Given the confidentiality of responses to the instrument and the more lenient attitude of the public toward marital dissatisfaction, the writer feels a more creditable explanation is a broader concept of marital happiness perceived among respondents. This broader concept allows for frequent or occasional dissatisfaction with marriage on a temporary basis in the context of a security interpreted as happiness. A dichotomy of purpose arises among participants: one group who crave the security of the institution of marriage but are unhappy or disappointed with their marital relationship and another group who are dissatisfied with the institution of marriage but crave the personal relationship contained within it. Other interpretations for these responses might include the description of a more realistic set of expectations for a relationship, a description which allows room for some temporary dissatisfaction. Others may interpret these responses as a loosening of standards for what constitutes a happy marriage.

Separation is a generally unused technique for settling disputes or conflict (or avoiding the same). Only 9.7% had ever left their

spouse or their spouse had left them for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict.<sup>4</sup>

Most participants had reasonable expectations for what marriage would be (41.7%) or found marriage to be better than they expected (41.2%). However, 16.6% were slightly or extremely disappointed in their marriage. This may indicate immature or exorbitant expectations which would qualify even a "good" marriage as disappointing (a problem indicated by one participant in an attached note on the returned instrument) or poor mate selection and lack of circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage. Participants indicated some significant areas of agreement and disagreement in their marriages. Areas of agreement for each topic did not significantly differ. Greatest agreement was on table manners and cleanliness (87.9%), a superficial topic which is often readily visible during courtship for the approval or disapproval of the date or possible mate. Matters of recreation were an area of slightly less agreement, checked by 70.3%. Few participants responded to "demonstration of affection" as an area of agreement or disagreement. Only 39.2% agreed on this topic. This may be interpreted as an oversight, or an area of so little dispute that few chose it, or it may be a result of questionnaire format. The area of lowest agreement was handling family finances (18.9%), a fact many would support with statistics which display inflationary spirals and present jobless rates. Matters of recreation were also areas of low agreement (14.9%). This is an area which seems to be considered in mate selection but obviously becomes an important area of daily marital adjustment. From this study, it would

seem that more emphasis on the importance of recreation in marriage could aid this adjustment. Aims, goals and priorities in life were also an area of disagreement in many marriages (15.0%). Again, emphasis on communication and interchange of thought on these important areas during mate selection could do more to contribute to solidifying future marriages. Demonstration of affection (7.7%), table manners (5.4%) and conventionality (5.5%) were areas of least disagreement among these marriages. Sexual relations (9.7%), in-laws (12.5%) and religion (12.2%) were areas of disagreement but did not support the widely assumed idea that these are the areas of greatest disagreement in most marriages. This may be a reflection of some significant societal changes. Sex has become a more openly discussed topic. Young families are more mobile and often live far from parents, so in-law involvement and conflict have declined. National church attendance and involvement indicates a weakening influence of that institution on the average home.

Marital satisfaction scores were computed for all married participants according to number of family relations courses completed. A small difference was found between those who had completed no family relations courses (average +16) and those who had completed one family relations course (average +21.2). Surprisingly, a slight decrease in satisfaction was found when participants completed two or more courses (average +20.7). Range of marital satisfaction scores indicated no significant difference among the groups. One course in family relations may slightly improve marital satisfaction of participants but diminishing effectiveness can be seen in the data when a participant completes two

or more courses. From this small sampling, it would seem individuals who have taken two or more family relations courses are less happy with their marriages than those who have completed one course or no courses. This may be a result of increased awareness of deficiencies in their own marriage after such training, or it may be the result of a sacrifice of realism when idealized marriage is emphasized in study. For some students, value confusion may occur when two or more courses are completed with different instructors of widely varying philosophical background.

Respondents who frequently or occasionally wished they had not married were compared. No significant difference was found between those who had completed no family relations courses (37%) and those who had completed two or more courses (34%). Those who had completed one course were slightly more happy, 29% wished frequently or occasionally they had never married. Again, this would seem to indicate a diminishing effectiveness of family relations classes. Those who completed one course seemed to have greater satisfaction in marriage than those who completed two or more courses. Instruction in family relations seemed to have a positive effect on marital satisfaction when compared with those who had no instruction.

Responses to Question #17 verified similar conclusions (see Table 25). Those who had completed no family relations course would choose to marry the same person if given an opportunity to live their life again. This group chose their same spouse again more often (63%) than those who had completed two or more family relations courses (60%), and less often

than those who had completed one course (66%). Significantly more respondents who had completed one or more family relations courses expressed dissatisfaction with their mate choice (18%) than those who had completed no courses (0%). These respondents would choose to marry a different person in living their life again. Respondents were more likely to choose not to marry again if they had completed one family relations course (12%) than if they had completed no course (10%). Some differences were found among respondents who chose to live with a person unmarried if given another choice. Five percent of those who had completed no courses, four percent of those who completed one course and three percent of those who completed two or more courses checked this option. Results of this question did not verify a greater satisfaction with marriage for those who had completed one or more marriage and family relations classes. Those who had completed some marriage instruction seemed slightly more dissatisfied with their mate selection and more dissatisfied with marriage as an institution (as indicated by the choices "not marry at all" and "live with a person unmarried") than those who had completed no courses.

In rating happiness of their present marriage, those who had completed no family relations courses checked "very happy" as a rating less often (21.5%) than both other groups (45% and 43%). When "very happy" and "happy" ratings were tabulated together, no significant difference existed between those who had completed no courses (79.5%) and those who had completed two or more courses (79.6%). Those who had completed one course rated their marriages "happy" or "very happy" in a



significantly larger number (86.6%).

Participants who had never completed a family relations course did not rate their marriages as average or unhappy. However, those who had completed one course rated 8.3% of their marriages as average, while those who had completed two or more courses rated 3.3% of their marriages as average. Only those who had completed one course saw their marriage as unhappy (8.3%).

One marriage among those who had completed no courses (5.3%) was rated as very unhappy.

Again, data does not evenly support family life education as an improver of marital satisfaction, particularly when more than one course is completed. It may, however, have a "rounding" effect as it decreases the percentage of marriages rated as "very unhappy" and increases the number rated as "unhappy" and "average". This effect is not evenly supported by data for those who completed more than two courses.

Similar data was produced when married participants checked their mates' ratings of their marital happiness. Those who completed one course were most likely to check their mate's response as "happy" or "very happy" (91.5%). Those who had completed no courses were significantly more likely to rate their marriage as "happy" or "very happy" (84.1%) than those who had completed two or more courses (79.9%). Again, data does not support the positive effect of family relations instruction on marital satisfaction.

When those who have left their spouse one or more times for a period of 48 hours or longer is related to the number of family relations

courses completed, those who have completed one family relations course (8.3%) and those who have completed two or more courses (10%) left their spouse or their spouse left them significantly more often than those who completed no course (5.3%). This final data clearly does not support family relations courses as a preparation for more stable marital life.

Data gathered in this study indicates that consistent support can not be made for family relations courses on the college level as preparation for more satisfying or stable family life. Marital satisfaction seems to increase with completion of one family relations course and decrease with completion of two or more courses to a level not significantly better than those who have completed no family relations courses. Divorce statistics and number of reported separations resulting from marital conflict also do not give even support for family relations education as a technique for improving marital stability. Therefore, the writer proposes acceptance of the hypothesis: College instruction in marriage and family relations has no effect on marital satisfaction and marital stability.

Recommendations for future study in this area include further and expanded study on the impact of family relations education as it relates to the uneven support given to marital satisfaction with more than one course in marriage and family relations. Further study would be improved by implementation of a larger sample group to insure more valid statistical returns. Other means of securing a study sample should be investigated to limit the study to those who had married or were married

at the time of the research or were divorced.

A longitudinal study of the marital history of an entire class of a certain graduating year could provide a valuable comparison for the effect of family relations education, if funds and time permitted.

Study of divorced populations could lend valuable input to areas of disagreement or misconception in troubled marriages, areas which family relations courses might effectively discuss. Similarly, areas of agreement and disagreement in successful and unsuccessful marriage can be applied to further emphasis and increased study in family relations courses.

A useful study could also be produced by completing a research similar to this on the high school level. Needs and interests of high school students are significantly different than those of a college population. Such a study could provide useful information for course adaptation and increased accountability on the high school level where such courses are fast gaining acceptance.

Method of distribution was successful in this study but improved questionnaire format could increase usable returns from participants responding to questions concerning children and their effect on the marriage relationship.

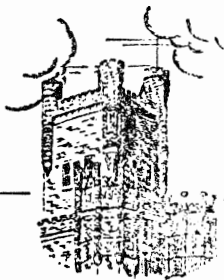
Finally, a proven need exists for further study on the diminishing effectiveness visible in this study when more than one family relations course is completed. Facts about course relevance, instructors' contradictions in multiple classes and the true emphasis of class content and instructor philosophy and technique is necessary to help family life edu-

cation fulfill its promise in the area of improved marital satisfaction and stability.

## APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE

INTRODUCTORY LETTER



## EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

*School of Home Economics*  
CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS  
61920

Dear Eastern Student or Alumnus,

I am a graduate assistant in the School of Home Economics, Eastern Illinois University, working under the guidance of Dr. Evelyn Melloh toward completion of a Master's degree. As a person who has attended Eastern Illinois University, you are a valuable source of pertinent data which will be used in completing my research for a thesis.

My concern is the impact of family relations courses on the college level. Your name has been randomly selected as a participant in this research. All names and information will be held in strictest confidentiality. A questionnaire is enclosed for your completion. Please complete it as truthfully as possible and return it to me in the enclosed, stamped envelope by March 17. Your cooperation in completing the questionnaire promptly is most urgent. Due to a lack of funding for research and increased postal rates, more mailings are an increased burden.

Thank you for your sincerity and cooperation in making this research possible through your completion of this questionnaire.

Sincerely,

Kathryn L. Lister

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## QUESTIONNAIRE



1. Age at present: check one  
\_\_\_\_\_ 17-22      \_\_\_\_\_ 23-30      \_\_\_\_\_ 31-40      \_\_\_\_\_ 41 or older
2. Sex  
\_\_\_\_\_ Male      \_\_\_\_\_ Female
3. What was the area of your undergraduate major? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Number of college courses you completed which dealt with the subject area of marriage and/or family relations:  
\_\_\_\_\_ None  
\_\_\_\_\_ One  
\_\_\_\_\_ Two or more
5. Number of times you have married. Check one.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Never  
\_\_\_\_\_ Once  
\_\_\_\_\_ Twice  
\_\_\_\_\_ More than two times
6. Total numbers of years married to your present or previous mate.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married one year or less  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married more than one year but less than five years  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married more than five years but less than 10 years  
\_\_\_\_\_ Married more than 10 years
7. Your age at the time of your first marriage:  
\_\_\_\_\_ 14-18      \_\_\_\_\_ 19-21      \_\_\_\_\_ 22-27      \_\_\_\_\_ 28 or older
8. Are you or have you ever been divorced?  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes      \_\_\_\_\_ no
9. If you answered "yes" to #8, have you been divorced more than once?  
\_\_\_\_\_ yes      \_\_\_\_\_ no
10. If you are divorced, when did you enroll in a Family Relations course?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Before first divorce  
\_\_\_\_\_ After first divorce  
\_\_\_\_\_ Never had a Family Relations course
11. How many children do you have?  
\_\_\_\_\_ None  
\_\_\_\_\_ One or two  
\_\_\_\_\_ Three or more
12. When was your first child born?  
\_\_\_\_\_ Before marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ Within first year of marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ During second year of marriage or later

13. If you completed a marriage and family relations course in college, what was your reason for enrolling in the course?

\_\_\_\_\_ Required in my major  
\_\_\_\_\_ An elective related to my major  
\_\_\_\_\_ Sounded like a course which would be useful or interesting  
\_\_\_\_\_ Recommended by a friend  
\_\_\_\_\_ Other reason

14. If you completed a marriage and family relations course in college, which three of the following study topics do you feel have been most useful to you in life? Check in the blank the three topics you feel were most useful. Use a circle in the blank to show the three topics you found least useful.

\_\_\_\_\_ a. Dating practices  
\_\_\_\_\_ b. Premarital sexual relations  
\_\_\_\_\_ c. Different family patterns in other cultures  
\_\_\_\_\_ d. Wedding customs and etiquette  
\_\_\_\_\_ e. Roles in marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ f. Maintaining the relationship  
\_\_\_\_\_ g. Mate selection  
\_\_\_\_\_ h. Mixed marriages  
\_\_\_\_\_ i. Love  
\_\_\_\_\_ j. Sex in marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ k. Circumstantial and personal readiness for marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ l. The engagement period  
\_\_\_\_\_ m. Handling family finances  
\_\_\_\_\_ n. Quarreling in marriage and handling conflict  
\_\_\_\_\_ o. In-laws  
\_\_\_\_\_ p. The effect of children on a marriage  
\_\_\_\_\_ q. Divorce  
\_\_\_\_\_ r. Contraception and family planning

15. Circle the letter of any of the topics above which you feel could have been emphasized or further explained in the family relations course or courses you completed.

CIRCLE THE LETTER of the response below which most accurately describes your feelings or opinions. All responses are strictly confidential.

16. Have you ever wished you had not married?

a. Frequently  
b. Occasionally  
c. Rarely  
d. Never

17. If you had your life to live over again would you:

a. Marry the same person(s)?  
b. Marry a different person?  
c. Not marry at all?  
d. Live with a person unmarried?  
e. Does not apply/Do not want to respond

18. How happy would you rate your present marriage?

a. Very happy  
b. Happy  
c. Average  
d. Unhappy  
e. Very unhappy

19. How happy do you think your present mate would rate your marriage?
- Very happy
  - Happy
  - Average
  - Unhappy
  - Very unhappy
20. How many times have you left your spouse or your spouse left you for a period of 48 hours or longer because of conflict?
- NO times
  - One or more times
21. Which of the following statements best describes your change in attitude toward marriage now as compared with your expectations before your marriage?
- Much better than I thought it would be
  - Only slightly better than I thought it would be
  - About what I expected, no better or worse
  - Slightly disappointing
  - Extremely disappointing, not at all what I expected

Place an X in the column which best describes the extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your spouse during your marriage on the following items.

	STRONGLY AGREE	AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
22. Handling family finances					
23. Matters of recreation					
24. Religious matters					
25. Demonstration of affection					
26. Friends					
27. Sexual relations					
28. Ways of dealing with in-laws					
29. The amount of time that should be spent together					
30. Table manners, cleanliness					
31. Conventionality (good, right and proper conduct)					
32. Aims, goals, and things believed to be important in life.					

SAMPLE REMINDER CARD

Dear Participant,

Have you returned your questionnaire on family relations research which you received this month? If not, could you please complete and mail the questionnaire within the next 5 days? Your answers are critical to the completion of this study.

If you have already mailed your response, thank you for your co-operation.

Sincerely,

Kathryn L. Lister

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